

INFO	LOG-00	EEB-00	AID-00	CEA-01	CIAE-00	CTME-00	INL-00
	DOEE-00	ITCE-00	DATE-00	EXME-00	EUR-00	OIGO-00	E-00
	FAAE-00	UTED-00	VCI-00	FRB-00	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00
	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	MOFM-00	MOF-00	VCIE-00	DCP-00
	NRC-00	NSAE-00	ISN-00	NSCE-00	OES-00	OMB-00	NIMA-00
	GIWI-00	MA-00	ISNE-00	SP-00	IRM-00	STR-00	DPM-00
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DEPT PASS FOR ARELLANO AND GREENE  
DEPT FOR SRAP, SCA/FO, SCA/RA, AND SCA/A  
DEPT PASS AID/ASIA BUREAU  
USDA FOR FAS OA/GSM/MILLER  
DEPT PASS USTR FOR GERBER AND KLEIN  
DEPT PASS TDA FOR STEIN AND GREENIP  
CENTCOM FOR CSTC-A, USFOR-A  
NSC FOR JWOOD  
OSD FOR SHIVERS  
COMMERCE FOR DEES, CHOPPIN, AND FONOVIDCH

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TAGS: [EINV](#) [EFIN](#) [ENRG](#) [ETRD](#) [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [AF](#) [FAS](#)  
SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN Q MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE SHARES  
IDEAS ON ASSISTANCE TO THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. DCM and USAID Deputy Mission Director met with the Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) Muhammad Asif Rahimi on March 19, 2009 to discuss the recent USG strategic review and the increased emphasis on agriculture. The DCM highlighted the increased role for agriculture in our counterinsurgency strategy (COIN), the USG geographic focus on the south and east of the country, and the underlying objectives to create jobs, increase agriculture production and improve rural living standards. To accomplish the USG strategy we will continue to target our assistance in support of small commercial farmers.

¶2. Minister Rahimi acknowledged the key to the agriculture sector lies in dramatic improvements in production for the small land holders in the south and east of the country, most of whom now operate a combined subsistence livestock and farming operation. He brings extensive experience in working with this community from his prior position as Director of CARE in the eastern provinces of the country in the 90Qs and more recently as a senior bureaucrat with the Ministry of Rural Reconstruction and Development (MRRD) in charge of the National Solidarity Program (NSP). The Minister emphasized as his plan for the way forward the Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD) program (originally developed for the ANDS by MRRD and the Minister when he was still part of MAIL) that constitute one of the two parallel pillars of the ANDS targeting agriculture and rural development, 1) CARD and 2) support to commercial agriculture.

¶3. The CARD concept, largely viewed as a state-led effort, integrates production methodologies, inputs, irrigation, infrastructure, and extension services into district level programs reminiscent of the Qinintegrated

rural development models of the 700s. Although in this case Minister Rahimi emphasized an apparent merger of the two pillars noting that the basic building block is the privately-held small commercial farm. Based on continuing research, the state should introduce new high value crop alternatives such as pomegranates and saffron, two crops currently supported by USAID that show impressive potential. The state should also expand commercial livestock and dairy operations. All of this will require extensive improvements in infrastructure, including power supply, roads, and irrigation.

¶4. Minister Rahimi described a model for private sector-led agriculture where state intervention supports a number of activities (horticulture, irrigation, livestock, extension and research) through surveillance, monitoring, and maintaining a basic emergency response capacity. He cited the aggressive private network of veterinary clinics that have been developed by USAID and other donor partners. Located throughout the country, these 400-plus clinics are instrumental in delivering vaccination and animal husbandry services; the State role in this network is to support them through an association such as the Afghan Veterinary Association (also being supported and strengthened by USAID). He further defined his extension network as a means to provide business development services and links to rural micro-financing to the small private landholders. He indicated there are upwards of 800 to 1,000 existing extension staff within the Ministry in need of fast-track training in the new model.

¶5. Minister Rahimi was very appreciative of the continuing USAID support to his Ministry in training staff in financial controls, procurement, human resources, and a policy unit but it is not enough. This mentoring and on-the-job training is crucial but is a necessary long term solution, but does not provide the rapid impact needed immediately. He is requesting immediate assistance through an office in a box where the team would carry out the work at the same time they were conducting the training. His Ministry has far too many objectives to accomplish quickly to wait for MAIL civil servants to be trained and become capable to do the work. As an example, he cited the work currently underway in the Land Management department to develop long-term leasing plans for part of the millions of acres held by the government. USAID has one key advisor in the unit but the Minister was desperate to assign more staff, both expat and Afghans, to complete the work already in progress.

¶6. Comment. The Ministry has its work cut out for it if it is to address the needs of the predominantly subsistence farming community. Minister Rahimi brings a new sense of dynamism to the plodding nature of this over-staffed Ministry. Although he views the state as a provider of services of first choice, there are several key areas, such as new sense of the importance of activities that ultimately support the private sector, where we have shared objectives and will continue our dialogue of effective change management.

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